CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to find the effectiveness of Canvas online discussion forums for essay writing classes based on the students' perceptions. This chapter will discuss the background of the research, the problem of the research, the purpose of the research, the operational definition of the research, the significance of the research, and the scope of the research.

1.1 Background of the Research

According to Rohana (2017, p. 153), somebody should use writing skills to communicate, speak, read and listen. Writing skills require training, thinking, creativity, and mastery of grammar, and should know what to write and what background topics will be written. It will make it easier for students to pour their ideas into writing.

Writing becomes a significant skill in higher education since students must produce many types of essays at this level of education. Slightly different from the lower level of English classes where the writing is usually about a simple topic, English writing in university is more academic and complex. The required essays to be written are also more complex than lower English levels (Hartini and Madya, 2018, p. 346).

An essay consists of paragraphs written on a single topic with a central main idea (Zemach and Lisa, 2003, p. 56). It must contain three sections, but a five-paragraph essay is common in academic writing. An essay is a brief piece of

writing that discusses, describes, or analyses a single topic. It can address an issue directly or indirectly, seriously or humorously. It can express personal opinions or report information. It should have several paragraphs, a good structure (introduction, body, and conclusion), and well-supported arguments.

In this pandemic era, all of those communicative competencies are becoming increasingly difficult due to online learning. Students are accustomed to improving their communicative competence offline or providing direct feedback to correct and understand. They will not receive feedback as directly as offline learning; instead, they will have to understand and learn from the online written input from the lecturer. Effective written communication can also be promoted online, for example, through online discussion forums such as Canvas.

Canvas provides educational tools to help lecturers and students learn more effectively. Lecturers can use this application to provide dynamic academic support for their students, as well as a collaborative learning environment and cognitive challenges (John, 2014). Canvas is used as an institutional learning management system by various institutions. Canvas can also be an alternative class across multiple learning situations outside the traditional classroom. This application is adaptable to different positions in the teaching and learning process. During the pandemic, lecturers and students in essay writing class used Canvas. In this case, by uploading materials and assignments to Canvas, the lecturer can deliver materials and projects to students at each meeting.

During the pandemic situation, the use of Canvas has been implemented to assist the writing learning process, especially in essay writing class, at Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember. Thus, the use of Canvas has been becoming one of the

research topics that need to be investigated in pandemic era. Therefore, there's a need for further research to find cumulative findings. Below will be presented a brief review of several previous studies related to the use of Canvas, which then this study will attempt to cover from the gap found.

The first previous study is from Zahir (2021), entitled "The Use of Proper Diction in Giving Comments and Feedback through Online Discussion Forums (ODFs) in Canvas." Students could write comments or feedback to their peers in online discussion forums. The understanding in the discussion would be affected by some factors; one of those is the proper diction. This study aimed to investigate the use of proper diction in online discussion forums. The findings revealed that several mistakes in proper diction were made when providing feedback and comments, such as using synonyms that have similar meanings but cannot be used in the context. Also, some factors affect students' selection of diction, such as interface, time, and student language skills.

The following study is from Aini (2021), entitled "A Study of Error Analysis in Students' Written Responses Posted in Canvas." The research objective was to find the common errors students made on their written responses posted in Canvas and the strategy used by students to correct their mistakes. The subject of this research was students in a guided writing class in English Education Program. The findings showed that the highest percentage of errors was from omission errors.

From those two studies above, they used the same media as this study, that is Canvas. However, they focused on the student's performance in writing using Canvas. In contrast, this study will be focused on students' perceptions of the

effectiveness of Canvas in online discussion forums for essay writing. The same previous study about students' perceptions of the use of Canvas has also been investigated by Ruslan et al. (2021) and Nurfitriani (2022). Those two studies' overviews will be presented below.

Ruslan et al. (2021) have investigated research entitled "Optimizing LMS Canvas for Interactive Online Learning Perceived by the Students." The study examines the students' perceptions of using Canvas to promote interactive online learning. Implementing a case study as the research design, this study involved 77 students as the participants and used both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect the data. In this study, the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study results revealed that students positively perceive Canvas as the media for interactive online learning.

The following study is from Nurfitriani (2022) entitled "Students' Perceptions on the Benefits of Canvas-Based Learning Activities in Technology-Enhanced Language Learning Class." This study aims to reveal students' perceptions of the benefits of Canvas-based learning activities in technology-enhanced language learning classes. This study involved three students of English Education at a University in West Java, Indonesia. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and then analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study indicates that students positively perceive using Canvas in technology-enhanced language learning classes. Students claimed that the usage of Canvas in learning activities has several benefits. Those benefits

are 1) Beneficial features for learning activities, 2) Improving students'
engagement, and 3) Improving students' independent learning.

The two previous studies focused on students' perceptions, the same as
this study. However, this study will attempt to investigate students' perceptions of
different subjects, that is, in essay writing class. In conclusion, from those
previous studies mentioned, this study attempts to investigate this topic because
there is a need for further research in this area, covering different subjects and
conducting this study using other methods. Therefore, the researcher is eager to
conduct a study entitled "The Effectiveness of Canvas Online Discussion Forums
for Essay Writing Class: The Students' Perceptions."

1.2 The Problem of the Research

Based on the study's background, the researchers propose the research
problem:

1. What are the students' perceptions on the effectiveness of Canvas online
   discussion forums for an essay writing class?

1.3 Purpose of the Research

1. This research aims to know the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of
   Canvas online discussion forums for an essay writing class.

1.4 Operational Definition of the Research

To avoid misunderstandings, the researcher should define the following
operational definition:

1.4.1   Student Perception

Students' perception refers to students' thoughts and beliefs about technology or media used in class. It is a personal interpretation of their learning experience

1.4.2   Writing Skill

Writing skill is expressing thoughts, ideas, opinions about something, or feelings in written language. Writing is the process of using symbols to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form. Writing is also a method of representing language in a written form.

1.4.3   Essay Writing

An essay is a group of paragraphs written about a single topic and a central main idea. It must have at least three sections, but a five-paragraph essay is a standard length for academic writing. An essay has three main parts; introduction, body, and conclusion.

1.4.4   Online Discussion Forums

An online discussion forums is a feature in online learning applications such as Canvas that allows students enrolled in the same course to communicate and interact with one another actively. This forums provides an online forums to share a post and comments by others. For students, it could be an online room for discussion, providing comments and feedback, and reflecting for them, with the lecturer in charge of all activities.

1.4.5   Canvas

A Canvas learning platform is an integrated set of interactive online services that provide information, tools, and resources to lecturers, learners,

parents, and others to support and improve educational delivery and management. This platform offers interactive discussion forums where users can post and respond to other people's posts.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research can provide two types of benefits, which are as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

The results of this study are expected to provide detailed information about the effectiveness of Canvas as an online discussion forums in essay writing class.

2. Practical Benefit

For lecturers, the results of this study can provide an overview of student perceptions during the learning process in class through online discussion forums.

1.6 Scope of the Research

In this study, the researcher focuses on students' perceptions of their learning activities using online discussion forums such as Canvas as learning media in an essay writing class of fourth-semester students at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember.